



Searching Out Solutions:
Alternatives to the Criminalization of Homelessness
Webinar

April 16, 2012



Welcome

Anthony Love
Deputy Director
U.S. Interagency Council on
Homelessness



Purpose:

- To introduce the recently released report: *Searching Out Solutions: Constructive Alternatives to Criminalization*
- To promote and encourage the implementation of the solutions contained in the report.



Proposed Solutions

- Creation of comprehensive and seamless systems of care
- Collaboration between law enforcement and behavioral health and social service providers
- Alternative justice system solutions

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Agenda

1. Alternatives to criminalization makes sense for communities
2. Access to Housing and Services is a better solution
3. The benefits of alternative/specialty courts and how you can get started setting them up where you live

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Panelists

- Melanca Clark: Senior Counsel, Access to Justice Initiative U.S. Department of Justice
- Christy Respress: Executive Director Pathways to Housing DC
- Steve Binder, Esq: San Diego County Deputy Public Defender & co-founder of the Homeless Court Program in San Diego

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Webinar Format

- Call will last approximately 1 hour
- We have reserved time at the end of the webinar for Q&A
- **Audience members who would like to pose a question can do so at any time through the “questions” function found in the “GoToWebinar” toolbar**
- Call audience members are “muted” due to the high number of participants
- Call will be recorded

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Searching Out Solutions

USICH Webinar on Alternatives to the Criminalization of
Homelessness
April 16, 2012

Melanca Clark
Senior Counsel, Access to Justice Initiative
U.S. Department of Justice



Homelessness Persists

On a single night in January 2011:

- 636,017 people were homeless in the United States, including 399,836 homeless individuals and 236,181 persons in families.
- 107,148 people were chronically homeless in the United States, or about 17 percent of all homeless people.

Source: HUD's 2011 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness

Criminalization Measures are Proliferating

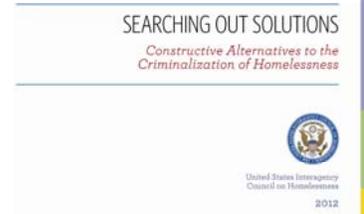
- Legislation that makes it illegal to sleep, sit, or store personal belongings in public spaces
- Ordinances that punish people for begging or panhandling in order to move people who are poor or homeless out of a city or downtown area
- Local measures which ban or limit food distribution in public places in an attempt to curb the congregation of individuals who are homeless
- Sweeps of areas in which people who are homeless are living in order to drive them out of those areas
- Selective enforcement of neutral laws such as jaywalking, loitering, and open container laws against people who are homeless
- Public health ordinances related to public activities and hygiene regardless of whether public facilities are available

Criminalization Undermines Real Solutions

- **Criminalization Policies:**
 - ▣ Can further marginalize men and women experiencing homelessness.
 - ▣ Are often costly and consume substantial state and local resources.
 - ▣ Do not address underlying problem.

Convening & Report

Report Link:
www.usich.gov/criminalization



Constructive Solutions: Creation of Comprehensive and Seamless Systems of Care

1. Develop and Implement Communitywide Plans to End Homelessness
2. Develop "Housing First" Permanent Supportive Housing
3. Ensure 24-hour Access to Emergency Shelter
4. Create Street Outreach Teams and Provide Safe Havens
5. Communitywide Collaboration through Education, Volunteerism and Donations
6. Communitywide Coordination of Food Sharing
7. Improve Access to Mainstream Benefits for Persons Experience Homelessness

Constructive Solutions: Collaboration between Law Enforcement and Behavioral Health and Social Service Providers

1. Outreach and Engagement
2. Cross-Training of Police Officers and Service Providers
3. Crisis Intervention Teams



Constructive Solutions: Alternative Justice System Strategies

1. Problem-Solving Courts
2. Citation Dismissal Programs
3. Holistic Public Defender Offices
4. Volunteer Legal Services Project and Pro Bono Attorneys
5. Reentry or Transition Planning
6. Reentry Housing
7. Reentry Employment



Department of Justice Stakeholders



OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Innovation • Partnerships • Safer Neighborhoods

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/



www.nij.gov/

COPS

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

www.cops.usdoj.gov/



www.justice.gov/atj/



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division

www.justice.gov/crt/index.php

Federal Interagency Reentry Council

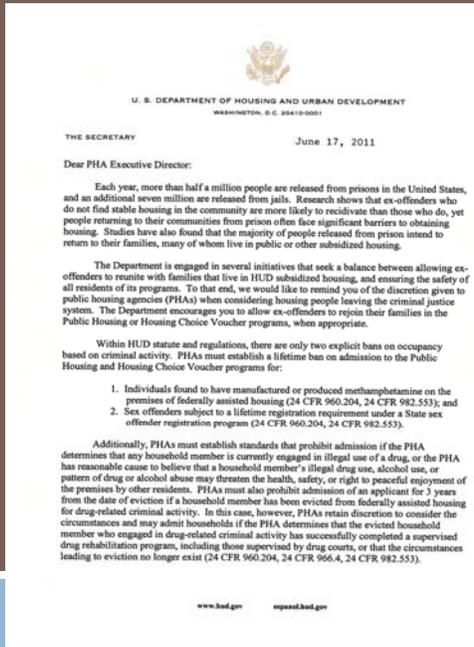
- ✓ Actions the federal government can take to better coordinate/leverage resources for reentry
- ✓ Actions the federal government can take to remove barriers to reentry
- ✓ Bully pulpit opportunities to advance the reentry agenda, dispel myths/clarify policies, and signal to the field the importance of the issue

Federal Interagency Reentry Council Website:
<http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/reentry-council>



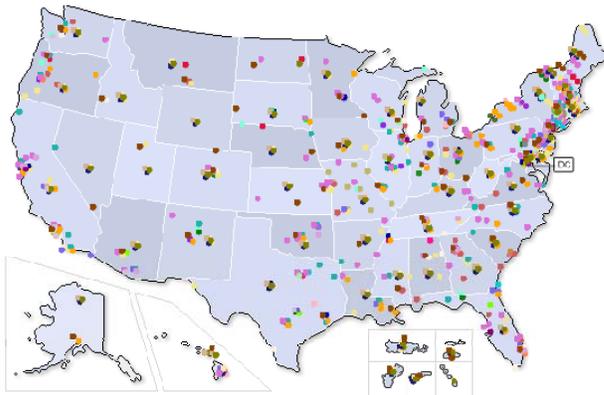
"AS PRESIDENT OBAMA RECENTLY MADE CLEAR, THIS IS AN ADMINISTRATION THAT BELIEVES IN THE IMPORTANCE OF SECOND CHANCES – THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE PAID THEIR DEBT TO SOCIETY DESERVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS AND CARING PARENTS, TO SET THE PAST ASIDE AND EMBRACE THE FUTURE. PART OF THAT SUPPORT MEANS HELPING EX-OFFENDERS GAIN ACCESS TO ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL BUILDING BLOCKS OF A STABLE LIFE – A PLACE TO LIVE."

Letter from Secretary Shaun Donovan and Assistant Secretary Sandra B. Henriquez to public housing authority directors, June 17, 2011.



Reentry Council Resources

National Reentry Resource Center mapped major federal reentry resources going to states and localities



www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

Searching Out Solutions: Alternatives to Criminalization

Access to Housing and Services is a Better Solution

*Christy Respress, Executive Director
Pathways to Housing DC*

Who We Serve

- ▶ Average length of time homeless 5+ years. As much as 30 yrs.
- ▶ Average age of 50
- ▶ 73% male, 26% female, 1% transgender
- ▶ 77% African American, 21% Caucasian, 2% Latino
- ▶ 100% SPMI on the ACT teams
- ▶ 80% co-occurring disorders
- ▶ 40% + involvement with criminal justice
- ▶ High medical needs: hypertension, diabetes, HIV, obesity, cancer, etc.

Housing First

Outreach

Permanent Housing
and Support Services

Prevention is the key...

- Why do the people we serve have contact with the criminal justice system?
- Impact of Housing First on reducing contact

Resources Needed

- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Services
- ▶ Additional Program Supports
 - Example: Partnership with CSH for Frequent Utilizers Services Enhancement (FUSE)

Partnerships

Private Sector Partners

- Downtown Business Improvement District
- Landlords willing to work with persons with criminal records

Partnerships

Law Enforcement

- Crisis Intervention Officers (CIOs)
- Mental Health Treatment Courts

Housing First, what next?



Thank You

Christy Respress
Executive Director, Pathways DC
crespres@pathwaysdc.org

For more information please see the
Pathways to Housing website:
www.pathwaystohousing.org



Searching Out Solutions: Homeless Court Program

*Presented by Steve Binder, Esq.
April 16, 2012*



ORIGINS:

Frustration & Despair



SURVEY SAYS...:

*116 of 500 Homeless
Veterans Speak Up*



ACCESS:

- Access to Justice
- Promoting Confidence in the Court
- Implementation and Replication

PURPOSE, PROCESS & PROOF:

Building blocks for
treatment and public
safety

PROCESS:

- Transparency of Process
 - OVERCOMING fear of the unknown
 - SHARING information
 - PREPARING for Court

(for all the collaborative partners)

PROCESS & ATTITUDE:
Relationship and Trust

TRUST:

- Step-by-Step Review and the Reasons for Doing So

IDENTIFY:

- ✓ *Veteran Status*
- ✓ *Diagnosis*
- ✓ *Treatment & Action Plan*



ABA PUBLICATION:
*"The San Diego Service
Provider Tool Kit"*



RESOURCES:
Steve Binder
San Diego County
Office of the Public Defender
619-338-4708
Steve.binder@sdcounty.ca.gov

RESOURCES:

American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness and Poverty

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_services/homelessness_poverty.html

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

www.nchv.org

Veterans Village of San Diego

www.vvsvd.net



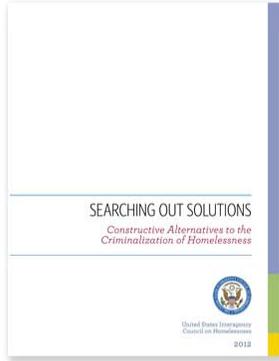
Questions?

- Please submit your questions via the chat function.
- The webinar will be available by the end of the week on our websites at <http://www.usich.gov>





Resources



Learn more about the report and solutions on our website:

<http://www.usich.gov/criminalization>



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No one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.